Roland digital RECORDING Connection
A Roland Users Group

TRACK NOTES

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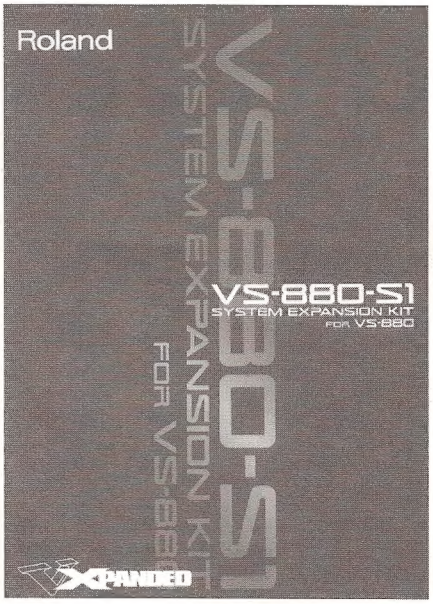
V-XPANDED

EXPLORING VS-880-S1 "V-XPANDED" SOFTWARE

Hopefully, you've already updated your VS-880 with the V-Xpanded software. With this update, you'll be able to take advantage of some of the upcoming third party software alliances mentioned in this issue. It's also one of the most incredible values in the history of the music industry—for only $125 retail, you get the ability to create the perfect mix using dynamic and snap shot automation, 10 new effects algorithms, including the amazing microphone simulator, a vocoder and the voice transformer. Additional features include track level adjust, FX inserts on the master output, stereo buss inputs to Input>Track mix and many more.



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VOICE TRANSFORMER

Robots, adults to children, male to female, the VS-880's voice transformer does it all. It sounds natural because it intelligently transposes the "formants" of the voice, as well as the pitch. So what are formants? When you sing a note, your head produces a natural resonance and also filters the sound to give it its characteristic quality. These are formants of the sound.

If you transpose this sound by changing the pitch, you also transpose the formants. The result is like shrinking the head of the singer by the amount of the transposition. If you raise the pitch an octave, you shrink the head to half its original size. No wonder using a sampler or normal pitch shifter results in such unnatural sounding transpositions.

By controlling the formants, you can actually adjust the size of the head to the appropriate size for that pitch. This results in a more natural sounding transposition.

MIDI AND THE VOICE TRANSFORMER

Can you use these natural sounds to add harmonies to your music? The answer is yes. The voice transformer responds to MIDI notes. Let's say you want to add a harmony to your chorus vocal. First, copy the original vocal track and insert it into the voice transformer. Turn on MIDI Ctrl under the voice transformer's parameter list in the Effects section. Adjust the formants so the voice sounds natural for the range of your harmony. Now, you can use MIDI via an external keyboard to control the exact notes of the transposition. You can then bounce the new harmony part to another track in the VS-880.

EDITING THE VOICE TRANSFORMER USING VS-880 FADERS

You can experiment with "fattening" a vocal or voice-over by using the voice transformer and editing it in real-time using the first five faders of the VS-880 mixer. To do this, enter the effects editing section by pressing EFFECT until you see EFFECT 1?. Press YES and then dial in one of the voice transformer's effects. Of course, you'll need to insert your vocal track into this effect in the mixer section.

Now, use the parameter buttons to find the parameter called FaderEdit. Turn this ON. Do not exit from the effects editing window. Now you can use the first five faders to adjust the parameters of the voice transformer. The parameters are mapped in the following way: Fader 1=Robot on/off
Fader 2=Pitch
Fader 3=Formant
Fader 4=Mix
Fader 5=Reverb

Internet Connections

WEB UPDATE

In the last issue of Track Notes, we mentioned a news group dedicated to the VS-880. This news group continues to grow, adding many interesting postings about the VS-880, including how it is being used and questions about how it functions. Please note, however, that the site has moved. If you are interested in checking it out, here's how you do it.

Send an e-mail message to:
http://www.mooncafe.com/lists/vs880.html
In the SUBJECT area, type the word SUBSCRIBE. You can also type SUBSCRIBE DIGEST in the subject area. This will get you one e-mail a day with all of the messages combined. By subscribing, you'll open the floodgates to a tremendous amount of VS-880 e-mail.

VS-880 FAQs

Members have also compiled a summary of the most popular topics and comments made by other VS-880 users. Topics covered range from the very basic (how to bounce with effects) to the very advanced (how to use the VS8F-1 card to process your mix for Dolby encoding).

Via this group, we found out about another great Web site dedicated to the VS-880. Check out: http://colargol.idb.hist.no/~timh/vs880.html.

Mark of the Unicorn | Emagic | Steinberg | Cakewalk | Opcode Music Software Systems Inc

Third Party Support of the VS-880

In the past, we've mentioned some of the exciting support for the VS-880 by third party software companies. This has included some of the VS-880 mixer templates in high powered sequencers by Mark of the Unicorn, Emagic, Opcode, Cakewalk and Steinberg. In this newsletter, we're going to highlight an AirWorks software program that's scheduled for a September release.

AIRWORKS

AIRWORKS V-SLINK SOFTWARE

AirWorks has created a very versatile Macintosh utility program for the VS-880. This program has two parts: a file conversion program and a play list conversion program. Let's look at the file converter first.

FILE TRANSFER AND CONVERSION

Let's say you want to transfer some raw audio from your VS-880 to your Mac. Maybe you want to take a mix and integrate it into a multimedia program that requires an 8Bit 22kHz format. Or, you're working with a QuickTime video program that needs an AIFF audio file. AirWork's V-Slink software is your key to getting these jobs done.

First, you need to connect to your Mac using the SCSI port on the VS-880. Then, via V-Slink, you can look at all your available song files recorded on your VS-880. Using V-Slink you can copy your takes over to the Mac via the SCSI buss. The files will be saved in the format you select using the options available through V-Slink, including AIFF, .SND and SDII. You can then edit these files on your Mac using a basic wave form editor. You can also convert the files to different sampling rates or different bit formats. You'll then be able to open up the files in multimedia programs and sequencers that support audio.

PLAY LIST CONVERSION

This part of the program is great if you're working with a friend or associate who has a ProTools™ or an Avid™ system. Again via SCSI, the AirWorks software will allow you to select a song on the VS-880 and then copy the song and all of its audio files directly to your computer's hard drive. The play list of the song will also be converted into a form that can be read directly by DigiDesign's ProTools™ or Avid™.

All of your virtual tracks and all of your edits and recordings will show up just as if they had been recorded directly on your Mac. You can then edit the play list, process a file using a plug-in, integrate the audio with the video in your Avid™ system or use the material in any way these programs allow.

When you're done, just transfer everything back to the VS-880. This level of integration will open a variety of doors for VS-880 owners, especially in the world of video creation.

Tech & Feature TIPS

USING VIRTUAL TRACKS

The VS-880's virtual tracks are powerful tools to use while working on your music. Let's take a look at several key benefits of using virtual tracks: keeping your original tracks after a bounce, storing dry tracks in case you want to change some effects later, recording many takes, and moving tracks around to free up a track for recording or editing.

BOUNCING TRACKS

If you aren't the world's best mixing engineer, then the VS-880's virtual tracks will become your best friend. When you bounce tracks using tape, then add more material to those original tracks, you're stuck with that mix. Sometimes, you'd really like to change things after you've heard more of the song's instrumentation. By using virtual tracks, you can keep the original on a lower V Track and add more material. Later, if you want to remix, you just bring up the original tracks and do the bounce again.

TIPS FOR REBOUNCING

Use SCENE to store your virtual track selection, effects and levels of the original bounce mix. When you want to remix, just press the appropriate SCENE button and you'll instantly have the VS-880 configured to do the bounce again, including all of the parameters of the original mix. Then tweak away and do another mix.

Because the VS-880 is a "pointer-based" editor, you can also copy the tracks you're going to bounce to another section on the 24-hour time line. You can then use automation to do the mix. These copies, of course, don't use any disk space and happen instantly. Be sure to put a LOCATOR at the beginning of the copy and at the original location of the track so you can copy the new bounce to the desired place in the song easily.

STORING DRY TRACKS

A friend of yours comes over to your house (studio) to record a guitar part. He's got his Boss pedals and is getting a great sound, but you're not sure this is the right sound for your song.

Since you have the luxury of virtual tracks on your VS-880, you can go ahead and record his blazing guitar and, on another track, record a direct out from the dry guitar. Store this on a virtual track, and you can later decide if you might like the sound of the guitar better using one of the COSM preamps, like the VinTweed, or the SLDN preamp for your mix. Since you also have the original dry guitar, you can make it sound any way you want for your mix.

RECORDING LOTS OF TAKES

And of course, don't forget the main use of virtual tracks: getting down as many takes as your vocalist or guitarist can perform. You'll then have as many choices as possible for your song.

Because the VS-880 is a pointer-based, random access hard disk recorder, you actually can never run out of virtual tracks to store your music. Why? Because you can use the EXCHANGE function to move virtual tracks around from track to track. If you happen to use up all 64 V Tracks in one location, you can always copy the first eight V tracks of your song out to another spot on the time line (say one hour later) and then use the 56 virtual tracks available at that location. You'll never run out of V Tracks.

REARRANGING YOUR SONG USING THE SONG END FUNCTION

COPYING A WHOLE SONG

One of the advantages of the VS-880's hard disk recording is that when you're copying or erasing, you're just editing "pointers" to the original material, not the material itself, which is safely stored on the hard drive. This makes your edits virtually instant and allows you to try a variety of techniques impossible or extremely time consuming with other systems.

You even have the ability to copy a whole song and edit just a section, or maybe rearrange a chorus or two. Here's the easiest way to copy the top virtual tracks of your whole song to a new location.

Enter TRACK: COPY and clear all old tracks from previous edits using the NO cursor. Put your left hand on the Channel Edit buttons and the right on the right cursor. Press Channel Edit #1, Rt Cursor, Channel Edit #1, Rt Cursor, Channel Edit #2, Rt Cursor, Channel Edit #2, Rt Cursor.

Continue this process on all of your tracks. This left hand, right hand rhythm is an easy way to quickly select all of your tracks for copying. Once you've gotten all of your source and destination tracks entered, press the right Parameter button to display the START TIME.

For START and FROM, press SHIFT + SONG TOP to enter the very beginning of the song. For END, press SHIFT + SONG END. For TO press SHIFT + SONG END followed by five short taps on the FF button. This will move the "now time" five seconds away from the end of your last song, giving you some room. Place a MARKER or LOCATOR at the beginning of the new copy before completing the edit.

Although this may sound a bit complicated, it's actually a fast process to execute. You now have a copy of your whole song to use for editing.

REASSEMBLING A SONG USING SONG END

Let's say you want to try your song with two choruses, instead of one, after the first verse, and one fewer repeats of the chorus at the end of the song.

Here's a tip for reordering the sections of a song to accomplish this type of editing. First, place Locators at the beginning and end of each section you want to try in the new version. Use these locators for the START and FROM (same location) and END parameters. Use SHIFT + SONG END for the TO parameter. This will automatically place you at the very end of your last edit and really speed up your copying process.

ATTENTION VS-880 USERS

We received the following letter from Paul Thuriot. Paul is in the band illEarth, which plays a myriad of musical styles ranging from classical to jazz to metal to dance/techno and everything in between.

"We spent quite a while creating complex sequences on an XP-80. We recorded them onto the 8-1 as a scratch track for timings. We began recording guitars and bass straight into the VS-880 with the Mic Simulator to give them a fuller recorded sound. We made many recordings of the solos and made a solo compilation file. The vocals were the main experiment. We 'played' with so many effects that there are no straight vocals anywhere on the recording. With the expanded effects board it's like an effects playground that you just don't want to leave. And I totally love the vocoder and voice transformer. Once everything was to our liking, we recorded the mix to 7-8 and 8-8 with a dance/techno remix of the song on 7-7 and 8-7.

We also use the VS-880 live. Since we are just a three piece band (two guitars, one vocalists and one keyboardist), we couldn't get all the parts like we wanted. So, in a sense, we cheated. We recorded the guitar and vocal parts (like they would have been played live) that we couldn't play live. Then we have the VS-880 synced with the XP-80, which is the brain of our entire show. It plays all the rhythms/drums and performs all of our program changes so we are free to concentrate on playing.

I'm interested in trying a new experiment with other VS-880 users from all over the world. All that's required is a VS-880, a zip drive and an open mind. All musical styles and all instruments, engineers, professionals, and novices are more than welcome.

One user will start off the entire process with an idea, put it on a zip disk with 'instructions' for the other artists, and send it on it's way. It will be a real 'building' process, where all the artists may or may not ever meet each other in person—just jam via the VS-880."

Those interested should contact:
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NEXT ISSUE

Editing in-depth

Letters

Vocoder

Record with effects

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